

Rhetoric I.13

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***Rhetoric* (Excerpts)**

by Aristotle

Translated by Michael Pakaluk

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Justices and injustices, then, have been defined in relation to two kinds of law...: I mean, law which is distinctive, and law which is common to everyone. Distinctive law is that which a particular group sets down for its own members (it is partly written down, and partly unwritten); law which is common to everyone is that which accords with nature. For there really is, as everyone senses, something just by nature and common to all – and something unjust – even when people have no association or

agreement with one another.

This for example is what Sophocles' Antigone is plainly referring to, when she says that the burial of Polyneices, although prohibited, is just, meaning that it is just by nature:

Not belonging to today or tomorrow,
It lives eternally: no one knows how it arose.

Another example is how Empedocles remarks that "Kill no living thing" is not just for some but unjust for others:

Nay, rather, this is lawfully binding on everyone, with a lawfulness which
stretches unbroken,

Throughout the boundless illumination of the overarching sky.

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